

Jackson Awards Bronze Star to WWII Veteran

Tuesday, 15 April 2003

U.S. Congressman Jesse L. Jackson Jr. today belatedly awarded a Bronze Star to 83-year-old Army veteran John Puchalski at his home in Lansing.

Mr. Puchalski earned the citation – but never received the corresponding medal – for his distinguished service in World War II. He served in the Army's 82nd Field Artillery Battalion from October 1944 to May 1945.

"It's an honor to finally present to you this magnificent Bronze Star. It is especially fitting at this time," Congressman Jackson said. "Your distinguished service to this nation and your selfless heroics in the battlefield furthered the cause of freedom around the world. There is no higher gift to humanity. On behalf of an extraordinarily grateful nation, I salute you and thank you."

Puchalski thanked Jackson for helping to secure the long overdue honor after all these years. "I am so proud of this," Mr. Puchalski told the congressman.

According to the Army, Mr. Puchalski earned the medal for his "exemplary performance of duty in active ground combat (and) keeping the finest traditions of military service."

Born and raised in Chicago's South Shore, Mr. Puchalski joined the Army in 1944. He trained in Fort Bliss, Texas, and later fought in the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre. He was among the first troops to land in the Philippines. Mr. Puchalski, who was nicknamed "Pooch," retired from the Army with the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Puchalski and his wife, Eleanore, have three children -- Alan, Cathy and Thomas. Mr. And Mrs. Puchalski have lived at 18315 Grant Street in Lansing for the past 10 years. Prior to that, they resided in South Shore.

After the war, Mr. Puchalski worked as a millwright at Republic Steel in Chicago for nearly 40 years. He retired from Republic in 1982.